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S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE
MEETING IN MONKWELL STREET,

AT THE ORDINATION OF THE
REV. JAMES LINDSAY,

BY THE
Rev. HENRY HUNTER, D. D.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,
THE QUESTIONS PROPOSED
BY THE
Rev. ANDREW KIPPIS, D. D. F. R. S. and S. A.

TOGETHER WITH THE ANSWERS TO THE SAME.

AND
THE CHARGE,
BY THE
Rev. JAMES FORDYCE, D. D.

L O N D O N:
PRINTED FOR J. BUCKLAND, IN PATER-NOSTER-ROW.
M,DCC,LXXXIII.

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HENRY HUNTER

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THE QUEEN



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1800

THE QUEEN'S

THE BELIEF OF THE GOSPEL A SOURCE OF
JOY AND PEACE.

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A
S E R M O N.

ROMANS XV. 13.

Now the God of hope fill you all with joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

THE great ends for which the Gospel was written, and for which it is preached, are, that the professors of Christianity may be from time to time instructed in the grounds of their belief, and that they may enjoy the consolations which flow from a well established faith. The reason assigned by Luke, the beloved physician, for his writing the history of Jesus Christ, is, that Theophilus might know the certainty of those things, wherein he had been instructed. There is one great disadvantage attending a civil establishment of Christianity, namely, a reception of it from fashion rather than from a persuasion of its truth and importance. In such a state, as many quarrel with the gospel for no cause, so many embrace it, they know not why, and hence are utterly unqualified to give an answer, to any man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in them. One

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cannot

cannot help wishing, my beloved friends, that it were otherwise ; that professing Christians should not only have comfort in the exercise and enjoyment of their privileges, but also, that their comfort should be built on the solid foundation of knowledge and conviction ; that they should not only be filled with peace and joy in believing, but that they should at the same time know *in whom*, and *why* they have believed. I have therefore chosen the words just now read, and the solemnity of the ordination service of a Gospel Minister, as affording a fit occasion of discoursing to you, in as plain and persuasive terms as God shall be pleased to enable me, of the grounds and evidences of your holy faith, that through the blessing of Heaven it may administer to you, everlasting consolation and good hope through grace.

The Apostle suggests, verse 4th, that Scripture is the source and the repository of useful knowledge, and that the reasons why divine truth was committed to writing, were, our information, our hope, and our joy. " For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." At the 8th verse, he considers the salvation of a lost world, as the grand object of the Most High, under the Jewish, as well as under the Christian dispensation ; which are indeed not two, but one, in two different forms. " Now I say, that Jesus Christ was a Minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the
" pro-

" promises made unto the fathers : And that the
 " Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy, as it is
 " written, For this cause I will confess to thee a-
 " mong the Gentiles, and sing unto thy Name.
 " And again he saith, rejoice ye Gentiles, with his
 " people. And again, Praise ye the Lord, all ye
 " Gentiles, and laud him all ye people. And again,
 " Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse; and
 " he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in him
 " shall the Gentiles trust." The passages he here
 quotes, from Moses, from David, from Isaiah,
 clearly prove that at three very different and dis-
 tant periods of the Jewish Church, full and expli-
 cit intimations were given of an approaching delive-
 rance not to the Jews only, but to the Gentiles al-
 so; and it cannot admit of a doubt, that the delive-
 rance to which they refer, at least, in Paul's appre-
 hension, was that, which Jesus Christ wrought by
 his incarnation, life, death, and resurrection. Here
 then God has laid the foundation of one pillar of the
 Christian faith, namely, in the concurring and ex-
 press declarations which he at sundry times, and in
 divers manners, made to the world concerning this
 great event.

Not to insist on that first and general prediction,
 concerning the seed of the woman, who was to be
 the bruiser of the serpent's head, let us advance to
 that period when God began to reduce into a parti-
 cular form and system his purpose of good will to
 men; that is, when Abraham, at the age of seventy
 five, was called of God from his kindred and habita-

tion, separated not only from his idolatrous neighbours but his own nearest relations, sent into a state of perpetual banishment, childless, and beyond all hope or probability of progeny; and yet under all these disadvantages, constituted and declared the heir of the promise, the progenitor of that illustrious Saviour, in whom at length, all the families of the earth should be blessed. From that moment we see a fence planted around him and his family, which the violence of hostile surrounding states was not able to break through, nor the revolutions of neighbouring kingdoms to pluck up, nor the wastes of all-devouring time to impair, till the designs of Heaven were accomplished. In all the subsequent events which affected this family and their descendants,—their various conditions and places of residence—the declarations made to them—the observations enjoined them,—the changes of their government, from its establishment to its annihilation,—all kept in view the object presented to their venerable ancestor—the Messiah, or Shiloh, to whom the gathering of the people should be. That men living so remote from each other in point of time, and under such various aspects of providence, should be led to view one and the same object as possessing a supereminent excellency and importance, and however differing in other things, in perfect unison here, is not to be accounted for from the usual principles of human conduct, and the ordinary current of human affairs, and can proceed only from the Lord, who is fearful in counsel and excellent in working. If it be asked, wherein consists the credibility of that record,

which

which conveys the knowledge of these things to us? it may be answered, that this very harmony and consistency will be admitted as no inconclusive argument by the candid and unprejudiced. To those who believe a superintending providence in the administration of the world, the truth and importance of these sacred oracles will be at once demonstrated, from the care which that providence has evidently exercised over them, in guarding them not only from external danger, but also from internal corruption. To what remote antiquity must we recur for the origin of the earliest of these antient books? through what a long extended line pursue their progress, till they were completed? From how many accidents have they been preserved? how many generations of men have they outlived? how many revolutions of the world have they withstood and escaped? The persons who were divinely inspired to compose them are long since departed. The men and the nations who often attempted to destroy them, have many ages ago been cut off from the face of the earth. That nation which was once the guardian and repository of them, is now dispersed and scattered abroad, and exhibits a striking and lasting monument in its character and punishment, of the eternal, immutable truth of the revelation of God to their forefathers. The languages in which the scriptures were originally written are gone into disuse, except among the learned few; yet notwithstanding, the word of Jehovah is an open treasure to every kindred, and people, and tongue. The wit of man has been employed against it, and it stands its ground: the malice and power

of men have tried to crush it, and yet it remains in full vigour: the weakness of superstition, and the madness of enthusiasm have aimed at perverting it, but it still runs pure: the fury of successively contending parties, has tortured and wrested it to their several purposes, but when their violence is extinguished and forgotten, it preserves its awful, steady, and unpliant dignity: and the experience of the past, leaves us no room to doubt of its future stability and progress. I shall add but one consideration more under this part of my subject. The credibility of the holy scriptures of the Old Testament, as constituting a proof of the Gospel, will be put beyond a doubt, if we consider through what hands they have been transmitted to us. Can the Jews, the inveterate enemies of Christianity, the murderers of the Lord of glory, be suspected of a design of contributing towards the chief support of the Christian faith? Surely no!—But yet they have done it—Without seeing the end which God had in view by it, they carefully preserved the inspired books, they had them numbered to a line, nay to a single letter, to prevent all addition or diminution, and have thereby, unknown to themselves, furnished the world with the clearest evidence of what they would willingly crush and destroy, and to this day exhibit their own condemnation as the ground of their hope.

If it be asked farther, Why the knowledge and possession of the Scriptures, a matter of universal concern, were so long limited to a peculiar spot and people? It may be answered, that in the very act of calling

calling Abraham and his family to the high honour of being the guardians of the divine revelation and the ancestors of our Saviour according to the flesh, an express intimation was made, that such distinction was not for their sake merely, but for the general good; that at length ALL nations might be blessed in one descended of that particular family, and in consequence of promises and predictions which were for a season to be deposited with them in behalf of the world at large. And the history, not only of that people, but of the surrounding and succeeding nations and empires satisfyingly prove, how wisely and how well an end so benevolent was answered, by means, at first sight so improbable. That people, "to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, "and the covenants, and the giving of the law, "and the service of God, and the promises: Whose "are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the "flesh Christ came," were for many ages doomed to an unsettled, wandering state—they travelled from country to country, hung up as it were, of providence, a spectacle before the eyes of all the nations whither they went, to warn them of the folly and wickedness of idolatry, and to call them to the living and true God. The venerable patriarchs themselves were early employed in this service; Abraham was sent to Egypt, and sojourned among the Philistines—Isaac also lived all his life long in the midst of idolaters, and Jacob was appointed to sojourn many years among the Assyrians, for the purpose of conveying thither the knowledge and worship of the One Supreme: and when it pleased God at length to estab-

lish their posterity in a country of their own, the spot which he chose was the very centre of the great and extensive empires which then divided the known world. These empires, unknown to each other, were one after another extending their conquests and their boundaries, while the preparation of the Gospel of peace, was hastening to its maturity in the hands of a few Hebrew shepherds; till at length the promised, the appointed, the expected, the seasonable hour, the fulness of time came—the Prince of peace appeared. Permit me to mention some striking circumstances in the state of the world at that period, tending to evince the special care which the divine providence exercised over it, and the evidence of Christianity which flows from it. While the arms of Greece, under Alexander the Great, as he is commonly styled, were reducing to subjection the eastern world, and adding the vast empires of Assyria and Persia to to the Grecian; Rome was in the west, by violent, though rapid strides hastening to universal dominion in Europe: and the fierce disputes which ensued upon the death of Alexander, which armed his successors one against another, and dismembered the large and unweildy fabric of his kingdom, paved the way for the Roman standard, till it advanced from conquest to conquest to plant itself in remotest Asia; and thus, immediately previous to the Christian æra, half the globe became subject to one power, was combined in one mighty system of government, beyond comparison greater than the world ever saw before or since. To increase our wonder, in order to facilitate the introduction of the Gospel, the commo-
tions

of the nations suddenly subsided, and all became hushed in universal peace; and that at a time, when science shone in all her splendour, when philosophy was upon the throne. Here then, was a field, wider than ever opened at any other time, for truth to expatiate in, and a test applied to it which nothing but the truth could stand. And thus, he who shakes the Heaven and the earth, the sea and the dry land, shook and settled all nations, when the desire of all nations was to come; and hence, we are instructed, that the truth of God was bounded for a time, to prepare the way for its more unlimited extent afterwards; was laid up in Judea, that thence, as from a centre, its light might diffuse itself over the whole Roman Empire.—“ And all this is of God who alone knoweth the end from the beginning, saying, my counsel shall stand, and I will fulfil all my pleasure.” For the establishment of your faith, Alexander fought and conquered, Socrates and Plato taught, Augustus made peace and taxed the world, and Daniel prophesied.

Such are the grounds of your faith and hope in Christ, arising from the state of the world previous to, and at the time of his appearance. We now advance to that period itself, and consider, how far the person whom we call Lord and Master, answered the expectation formed of him, and the predictions spoken concerning his person, character and office; and the proofs which he personally exhibited of his being the Messiah.

It

It is an acknowledged principle of natural religion, that from the known wisdom and mercy of God, his creatures in distress have reason to expect relief ; but, the time and manner of granting such relief, they must not take upon themselves to determine, but leave it to that wisdom which is the ground of their hope. Previous then to an intimation from Heaven, who could have said, by whom, and in what manner he was to work deliverance for his miserable and guilty creatures ? Such an intimation he was pleased early to give, as the encouragement of our hope ; and now that the great work of redemption is finished, we can discover a fitness and propriety in the means employed, though we durst not presume to say what these ought to have been, before they were discovered to us. The person who came upon the merciful errand of salvation, was God's own eternal Son, humbled to our level, made a partaker of our meanness and misery, but totally free from our guilt. In such a deliverer then, we behold one, who we have reason to believe would enter thoroughly into our case, from the near relation he bore to us, and who at the same time could suffer no impediment nor interruption in his benevolent work, from any necessary attention to his own private interest ; one placed in a station where he could set us a perfect example of all holiness, and possessing a nature wherein he could by death make a full atonement for sin ; and at the same time, in virtue of a superior nature, give value to that atonement, remove the curse which was in full force against his guilty brethren, whom he came to save, and through death open to them the way which
leads

leads to eternal life. Then, and never till then, was fully understood the meaning of those bloody sacrifices which were from time to time offered up to appease divine justice ; and of that, and such like expressions, “ without shedding of blood there is no “ remission of sin ;” and here we also discover the reason why Christ is in Scripture denominated “ the “ *Lamb slain,*” from the foundation of the world. But again, the arrival of Jesus Christ did not take the world by surprize ; the sending of his son was no new and sudden intention of the everlasting Father in the four thousandth year from the creation ; but a deliberate purpose formed before all worlds, and declared to man, the instant his condition required a Saviour ; that declaration was repeated, and rendered clearer and fuller as time rolled on, till it became so pointed and particular, as to leave candid minds who were informed of it, no room to hesitate concerning the application, when the object of this heavenly revelation actually appeared. To adduce but one or two out of that cloud of witnesses, which prove Jesus Christ to be He, of whom God spake to the Fathers by his servants the Prophets, let me refer you to Israel’s dying bed, and dying words, in the blessing pronounced upon Judah his fourth son, “ The “ sceptre shall not depart from Judah ; nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come : and “ unto him shall the gathering of the people be :” These words were spoken as long before Christ’s day, as from it, down to the present period. Jacob’s whole family consisted then of no more than seventy souls, and these driven by famine for subsistence into a
strange

strange land, which soon proved a house of bondage to them. Six hundred years and more elapse, before a king is known at all in Israel, and when one is at length chosen to reign, not Judah but Benjamin furnishes the sovereign: when that tribe was, after so long a delay, called at length to the regal dignity, the youngest son of a younger family of it is placed on the throne: in the third generation, the throne is shaken to the very foundation, and a violent revolution strips the crown of Judah of ten tribes, and erects a formidable rival kingdom. But this very revolution, instead of weakening or destroying the destined succession, serves only to illustrate and ascertain it. In process of time, a hostile invasion plucks up the kingdom by the very root, and both prince and people are carried captive into the enemy's country; but yet in the very wreck of empire, in the almost necessary dissolution which a seventy years bondage must produce, the existence of the state is preserved, and the royal line maintained unbroken, and Judah is again miraculously established in his own land, till at last the kingdom changes a temporal for a spiritual head, in the person of the blessed Jesus. And, after so long a period, the sceptre at length departs from Judah, when the Jews themselves give up the right of judging, to a foreign power, and acknowledge they have no king but Cæsar:—thus proving the truth of God, in the appointment of him whom they were zealous to deny.

The noted prediction of Moses, “ a prophet shall
 “ the Lord your God raise up unto you of your
 “ breth-

“brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear
 “in all things, whatsoever he shall say unto you.”

Acts iii. 22—the minute description of the material and particular circumstances of Christ’s death as delivered by David in the 22d Ps.—and of his death and burial by Isaiah in the 53d chap. of his prophecy—and of the precise time and end of his sufferings, by Daniel towards the end of chap. 9: constitute so many distinct and separate proofs, in their exact correspondence with the events which took place, in the land of Judea, under the administration of Pontius Pilate, that none but our divine Master could be the object of these prophetic enunciations; and jointly, form such a weight of evidence, as nothing but inveterate and determined prejudice is able to withstand.

But our blessed Lord, did not remain merely passive, in furnishing us with evidence whereon to build our faith. That we might place all confidence in him, as a Saviour, he claimed a divine original—he called himself the Son of God. And how was this claim supported? He did the works of God; he exercised an unlimited authority over the whole world of nature; over things visible and invisible. The prince of the power of the air fled at his command; the boisterous elements heard and obeyed his word; disease and death and the grave fulfilled his pleasure; to his penetrating eye the darkest recesses of the human heart stood unveiled, and hell itself could find no covering. To adduce instances were superfluous to them who are accustomed to read the Gospels. And these things

things were not done in a corner, nor performed before persons disposed to believe; the displays of this divine power were neither few nor doubtful, but exhibited in the face of the sun, before multitudes of spectators, and of those not a few who were mortified and provoked with what they saw; were under every disposition to detect and expose an imposture had it existed, and not destitute of ability for making every enquiry necessary to this end. It will be said, that the evidence arising from miracles is good only to those, who were eye and ear witnesses of them. This would be to reduce historical testimony within a very narrow compass. In what a deplorable state of ignorance and uncertainty would the human mind be involved, were nothing to be considered as true and certain, but what falls under the cognizance of our own senses? In other cases, and why not here, we rest and act on the evidence of credible witnesses, who have undoubted access to right information. Concerning the existence, the character, the life and death of Socrates, nobody pretends to entertain a doubt; the same may be said concerning the other sages, philosophers, moralists, heroes of antiquity; and yet I will appeal it to the candour of the impartial Deist himself, whether the evidence we are in possession of concerning Jesus of Nazareth be not much more clear, full, direct, and unsuspecting, than that which respects any other name existing previous to, cotemporary with, or even coming after our divine Master, down to the age which immediately precedes our own. Indeed, the happy revolution which wrought the temporal deliverance of these

these kingdoms, about ninety years ago, is an event not more clearly authenticated to me, than the decease which Christ accomplished at Jerusalem, for the salvation of a lost world, when Tiberius Cæsar was Emperor of Rome, and Pontius Pilate Governor of Judea. Unless, therefore, the ages past are to be reduced to an universal blank; unless dark oblivion is to draw her sable mantle over all events, with her rude hand demolishing every venerable monument—with her malignant pencil blotting out each precious record; unless human knowledge is to be confined to the little circle in which every man expatiates, to the few fleeting years which he spends upon earth, and to the slender, unimportant facts, which fall under his own observation,—and who can bear to think of assenting to this? the truth and importance of the gospel rest upon a rock, against which the folly, the madness, the desperate wickedness of man—against which the gates of hell, shall never prevail.

Such being the nature and evidence of the Christian faith, hope and joy flow from it as naturally as the stream from the fountain. But as no man can call Jesus Lord, but through the power of the Holy Ghost, and as it avails little to have the understanding enlightened, and the judgment convinced, if the heart remain insensible, or alienated, or rebellious; we must, if we would succeed, change the object of our address, and turn the word of exhortation to men into earnest prayer to God, adopting the words of the Apostle in the text, “ Now the God of hope
“ fill

“ fill you all with joy and peace in believing, that
 “ ye may abound in hope, through the power of the
 “ holy Ghost.” And O! that I could with truth
 add, in Paul’s words, respecting both you and my-
 self, “ And I myself also am persuaded of you, my
 “ brethren, that you are full of goodness, filled with
 “ all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.
 “ Nevertheless, brethren, I have *spoken* the more
 “ boldly unto you, in some sort, as putting you in
 “ mind, because of the grace that is given to me of
 “ God : That I should be the minister of Jesus
 “ Christ to the Gentiles, ministring the gospel of
 “ God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might
 “ be acceptable, being sanctified by the holy Ghost.”
 From what hath been said,

First, We discover the necessary connection be-
 tween divine knowledge and holy joy. As in the
 world of nature, God has inseparably united light
 and heat in the same body, so in the world of grace,
 the shining, the useful, and the happy christian, is
 a glorious compound of intelligence and zeal. What
 has the world not suffered through the separation of
 these ! What havock of the human species has fer-
 vour founded in ignorance made ! How many thou-
 sands have been misled, bewildered, lost—plunged
 into the abyss, precipitated from the rock, following
 that wandering fire, that glow-worm of the night—
 mere human reason. The lightless heat of Popish
 vehemence has strewed the earth with multitudes
 of the slain. The frigid light of philosophic phlegm,
 would rob the human heart of its most precious cor-
 dial,

dial, and sacrilegiously pull down the last refuge of the miserable. What God has joined together, let not man endeavour to put asunder. Let us do our utmost to give the lie to that maxim of infidelity, "ignorance is the mother of devotion," and with equal earnestness exhibit a practical proof, that the knowledge of God, is the love of God;—and that the love of God is man's truest felicity.

2. We here discover the relation which God has been pleased to establish between the careful and diligent use of appointed means, and the interposition and agency of his spirit and grace. "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God:" Ephes. ii. 8. Is preaching therefore useless and instruction vain?—surely no; for leaning on the same authority, we learn, "that faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."—That God can, and may, by an immediate revelation of his will, fill an ignorant and guilty soul, totally excluded from the usual helps, with wisdom and with joy, and of a stone raise up a child to Abraham, who can take upon him to deny? But that he should thus condescend to indulge the indolence, or to humour the frowardness, or to prevent the cavils, of the lazy, the peevish, or the proud, who shall presume to expect? As if the kingdom of Heaven were to be taken by storm, so are we to fight, run, and strive: as those whose righteousness is filthy rags;

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whose utmost efforts are absolute feebleness, whose highest merit is condemnation, so are we to look for the recompence of reward not as a debt, but of grace.

3. Let me point out to you another all-important connection, suggested from the subject—the connection of instruction and prayer. Had the Apostle of the Gentiles satisfied himself with writing and preaching to the Romans, he might have written the world full of books, and spoken with a thousand tongues, to no manner of purpose; he would have remained a mere sounding brass, or tinkling cymbal: or, had he, on the other hand, spent a life-time on his knees, to the petrification of the muscles and sinews, though he might have attained the character of the pious devotee, he must thereby have forfeited the much higher one, of the diligent, zealous, and successful Apostle; but we find him continually blending the two together: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.” When we have delivered our Sermons, perhaps we have performed the least part of our work; as he who has sown the seed has only acquitted himself of a portion of his husbandry. Would we have it take root, and grow, and bring forth fruit, the influences of Heaven are to be regarded, expected, solicited;—on the contrary, to expect

pest a crop through mere exterior influence, from a field, on which we have bestowed no labour, into which we have cast no seed—is to treasure up for ourselves sorrow and disappointment. Let us therefore watch and pray, labour and pray—and continue instant in prayer.

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hand on which we have bestowed no labour, into
which we lay our seed—is to treasure up for
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fore watch and pray, labour and pray—and continue

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S I R,

WE are met together, at this time, to receive your solemn dedication of yourself to the sacred work of the Christian Ministry; and to recommend you, by our humble and earnest prayers, to the divine blessing and favour. In doing this, we assume no dominion over your faith; neither do we pretend to convey to you any powers or prerogatives which you were not possessed of before. The qualifications that constitute a regular Minister of the New Testament, are, a firm belief in the Gospel, a principle of sincere and unaffected piety, a competent stock of knowledge, a capacity for leading devotion, and communicating instruction, and a serious inclination to engage in the important employment of promoting the everlasting salvation of mankind; to all which must usually be added, as occurs in your case, an invitation to the pastoral office, from some particular society of Christians. Where these things concur, a person is fitted and authorised for the discharge of every duty which belongs to the ministerial function. It cannot, however, be amiss, and in point of order and

decorum it is desirable, that such a person should publicly declare his purpose of devoting himself to this arduous work, and that he should request the exhortations and supplications of his Fathers and Brethren, together with their testimony to his abilities and character, and their affectionate recommendation of him to the churches of Christ.

It hath, likewise, been usual on these occasions, for those who consecrate themselves to the service of the gospel, to give a summary of their religious principles, so far as concerns the grand and leading doctrines of natural and revealed religion. This, however, is left to their own option. It is abundantly sufficient for them to declare only—their belief in the Revelation of Jesus, and their adherence to the Scriptures, as the sole standard of faith and practice. Accordingly, I shall content myself with asking you in general,

I.

What are your sentiments of the Christian Religion?

ANSWER.

Sir, As it was my early wish, and highest ambition to become, by permission of Providence, a Minister of Christ, I have endeavoured, as opportunity served, to make myself acquainted with his religion. Knowing, that rational and lively conviction can only be the result of serious and sober enquiry, and that he only, who is fully convinced himself, is qualified

lified to instruct and confirm others, I entered upon the examination of Christianity, both for my own satisfaction, and that I might be fitted for usefulness in that sacred office, to which my views were directed. Looking for light to that gracious Being, who guides the meek in judgment, and assists the honest researches of every pious mind, I endeavoured to consider the evidences for, and the objections against Christianity, with attention and impartiality. The result has been, a perfect conviction of its truth, its excellence, and its divine original : a conviction, which the cavils of scepticism never have, and, I trust, never will be able to shake.

Comparing Christianity with other religions, I found, that light and darkness were not more different. Till the sun of righteousness arose upon the earth, he who examines most attentively will discover, in the course of his religious enquiries, little else but atheism and ignorance, idolatry and superstition. 'Tis true, some men of superior genius entertained, and at times advanced, purer and better notions of divinity than were commonly received. But even the greatest among them breathed the infectious air of the times, and were, in many respects involved in the general obscurity. They were not free from superstition themselves; they encouraged the superstition of the people, and though they had possessed the inclination, they wanted the authority to accomplish a reform.—In short, whoever considers with attention the religion of the heathen world will find, that it was founded in ignorance, supported by delusion

delusion, immoral in its tendency, and in the rites and ceremonies of its worship, always ridiculous, often cruel, and sometimes to the last degree licentious and obscene. Who can look into the Christian scheme, and not be struck with the contrast? Here we find a chain of proof so strong and well connected, supporting a system so excellent in its nature, so well adapted to the state of mankind, so beneficial in its immediate tendency, and so noble in its ultimate end, that we know not which to admire most, the fulness of the evidence, or the beauty and the utility of the religion. We find events foretold of the most extraordinary nature, at a vast distance of time, with circumstantial accuracy, and by different men. In the exact completion of these prophecies, we have a convincing proof, both of the inspiration of the men by whom they were uttered, and of the justice of his pretensions, in whose person they were fulfilled. We find these pretensions farther supported by works infinitely surpassing the power of humanity; works done with the express view of proving a commission from God, and attested by plainer, more ample, and more credible evidence, than we have for any other historical facts.

In the character of that divine person, by whom, and in whose name and authority, these miracles were performed, we behold every noble, every amiable, every endearing quality, that can inspire reverence, excite admiration, conciliate affection, and prove an origin more than human. We find moreover, what his enemies were forced to acknowledge,

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—what some of the enemies of his religion are still forced to acknowledge, “that he spake as never man spake.” His doctrine bears not the stamp of human device, but breathes the air of Heaven: the worship he enjoins is pure and spiritual, like that Being who is the Author of it; and his morality, whether we consider the principles on which it is founded, the extent in which it is calculated to operate, or the motives and sanctions by which it is enforced, must appear, to every candid mind, the purest and most perfect, that ever was given for the regulation of human conduct.

It is neither possible nor necessary, that I should enter, at present, into a detail of the doctrines which constitute the objects of my faith, or run over even the outlines of that evidence on which my faith is founded. Permit me, Sir, only to observe, that I find within myself, what to me is in the room of many proofs. I know my wants: Christianity is the only religion that supplies them. I feel the symptoms of a fallen, degenerate nature: Christianity points out its origin, and furnishes the means of its restoration. I feel my own guilt; feel that I have offended the purity of God; that I am obnoxious to his justice, and deserve his vengeance. Christianity offers me pardon, shews me a propitious God ready, for Christ’s sake, to become a reconciled Father, and bids me be of good cheer, for my sins are forgiven. I feel my weakness to resist temptation, and my insufficiency to practise duty: Christianity furnishes me with spiritual armour, inspires me with
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fortitude, and discovers God himself fighting on the side of the faithful. Finally, I find, that this world is unable to fill the capacity of my desires. I long for something that it cannot give. I look with wishful eyes beyond its boundaries, and would fondly live and be happy, after its vanities are at an end. Christianity, and Christianity alone, has given me the full, explicit assurance, that I shall live and be happy, if I embrace those terms of salvation which the Gospel proposes. In one word, Christ alone binds up the broken heart, and speaks peace to the guilty soul. Christ alone offers support to the weak, and guidance to the fallible. Christ alone has opened the gates of Heaven, and purchased by his blood those certain hopes of immortality, without which the goods of the world were tasteless, and the evils insupportable. For these reasons, Sir, I have taken Jesus Christ as my Saviour. For these reasons I take his religion as the guide of my life, and will recommend it to others, as the only religion that can lead to peace of mind here, as well as everlasting happiness hereafter. Difficulties, Sir, I have found in Christianity; but difficulties I find in all the works and ways of God; and it were extreme folly, as well as presumption, to expect, that the limited faculties of man should fathom the depths of the divine wisdom. Our holy religion makes clear, what before was covered with obscurity, reveals whatever is necessary for us to know, and communicates a light adapted to our state: a light sufficient for all the purposes of piety and virtue, and for leading us on to that brighter day, when the intellectual eye shall be enabled

bled to take in a wider range; when the difficulties, that now perplex, shall be solved, the plans of the divine government more clearly discovered, and the mystery of redemption more fully comprehended. These, Sir, are briefly my sentiments of Christianity.

II.

You have, Sir, properly testified your belief in the gospel. But you cannot be ignorant that what is called the Christian world, is separated into different denominations, which are distinguished by the titles of different churches. Among these, the two grand divisions which prevail in Europe, are Popery and Protestantism. Popery is a scheme of a most daring and extraordinary nature. Its pretensions; its doctrines, its practices, its spirit may well strike us with astonishment, and I might add, with horror. After having reigned triumphant for several ages, it was vigorously and successfully opposed. Its authority was disclaimed, and its corruptions laid open; the Scriptures were appealed to against it; and that great Protestant separation was formed, which hath been supported by many considerable nations. The matters in dispute between the Papists and the Protestants are not slight and trivial, but, in various respects, infinitely important. You will give me leave, therefore, to ask you,

What are your sentiments of Popery, and of the Protestant Reformation?

A N S W E R.

My sentiments of Popery, Sir, are the sentiments of abhorrence. I consider it as the grossest corruption, possible to conceive, of the purest religion that ever appeared in the world. It has converted the beautiful simplicity of the gospel into an artful system of priestcraft, contrived to blind, mislead, and plunder the multitude. The idolatry of its worship is too palpable to admit of excuse. By claiming infallibility to its head, it establishes a tyranny of the blackest and most formidable kind. By its auricular confessions, it destroys all confidence of intercourse, and, by its absolving power, opens a door and even holds out encouragement to the most flagitious crimes. We conclude with assurance that such a system cannot be founded in a revelation, which has God for its Author: for the Father of Lights cannot be the father of idolatry, superstition and immorality. We find, on examination, that its pretensions to support from Scripture are frivolous in the extreme, and when it appeals to tradition, we deny the competence of the authority. It is not necessary, that I should point out the particular errors of Popery, which render it the abhorrence of every liberal mind. It is, indeed, a system of error, calculated to gratify pride and avarice, at the expence of truth, liberty, piety and virtue. Till I can reconcile my mind to the grossest idolatry; to spiritual tyranny in its blackest and most terrible forms; to worship the most superstitious and unscriptural; in a word, to fable, absurdity, and contradiction—till I can reconcile my mind to these, I can never

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reconcile it to Popery, or cease to pray for its downfall. Thinking, as I do, of Popery, I must think of course, that the Protestant reformation was like a second rising of the sun of righteousness on earth. By shaking off the fetters of anti-christian tyranny, it opened the way to freedom of enquiry, and that opened the way to truth. By putting the Scriptures into the hands of the people, from whom they had been long withheld, it gave them that infallible guide which they had been taught to look for in a different quarter; encouraged them to use their own reason in the investigation of religious matters, and shewed them, that their salvation must depend, not upon Saints and Priests, but upon God and themselves. In a word, to the reformation we owe that light and liberty, with which we are at present blessed. To the reformation I look back with thankfulness and joy, and will endeavour, by the blessing of God, to promote the reformed interest, as long as Heaven shall spare my life: promote it, however, not by those arts which Popery employs against its opponents; not by a spirit of bigotry and persecution; not by encouraging or abetting the civil power in oppressing men for conscience sake;—but, by the use of reason, scripture, and candid argumentation, the only weapons, which, in my opinion, a Christian Minister ought to employ.

III.

You have, Sir, well declared your disapprobation and dislike of a scheme so absurd, anti-christian, and persecuting as Popery; and your adherence to the
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Protestant reformation on its true principles. But even the members of the Protestant church are divided into different sects; and this is the case in our own country. One profession of Christians in England is peculiarly favoured by the laws; and its Clergy are provided for by the state, in such a manner as to lay open to many of them the acquisition of considerable emoluments and dignities. On the contrary, such as become Ministers among the Dissenters must expect, by far the greater part of them at least, to meet with a number of difficulties and hardships. Their difficulties and hardships will probably be such, as can only be borne with fortitude and alacrity, by the consciousness of being concerned in a good cause, by the possession of a very serious spirit, and by the prospect of another world. Since, therefore, considering the matter in a temporal view, it would be natural and desirable to apply to the establishment; let me ask you,

Why do you choose to engage in the Christian Ministry among the Protestant Dissenters?

A N S W E R.

My reasons for engaging in the Christian Ministry among the Protestant Dissenters are shortly these. I cannot approve of the church as constituted in this country. I conceive its modes of government, discipline, and worship, to be inconsistent with the simplicity and liberty of the gospel. The civil and religious establishments have too much interference. That equality of rank is destroyed which ought to subsist

subsist among the Ministers of religion, and a hierarchy set up, for which I can neither find authority in Scripture, nor expedience in reason, and from which, I am persuaded, many bad consequences must arise. Among the Dissenters I am freed of all these inconveniences. Their mode of worship is conformable to my own ideas. No man usurps authority over my conscience, and I am left at liberty to act, in every thing that regards religion, according to the dictates of my own mind. I follow the scheme which to me appears most agreeable to reason and Scripture, without blaming those, who, from conviction, hold a different opinion. Whilst I am freed from those inconveniences which relate to conscience, I am aware, that as a Dissenter, I must labour under others of a different kind. But against these I have prepared my mind; and am resolved to endure them with chearfulness.

IV.

On such important principles you have chosen to engage in the Christian Ministry, and we have reason to believe, that you are well furnished for the sacred work. But it is only the foundation of knowledge that can be laid in early life; and continued time and labour will be necessary to complete the superstructure. There are several branches of science and literature which may be very useful to a Minister. Some will be peculiarly serviceable, as preparatory to a better understanding of the divine oracles; and, above all, the holy Scriptures will be found an inexhaustible source of wisdom, pleasure,

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and advantage. The study of them, which is essential to the man who would truly explain, and rightly divide the word of truth, will afford employment for life.

Will you, therefore, diligently apply yourself to the study of the Scriptures, and to the farther acquisition of such other knowledge as may be necessary and becoming in a Christian Minister?

A N S W E R.

Convinced, as I am, that the Scriptures are the only rule of faith and manners; that they alone teach the knowledge of God, and of that scheme of salvation, which is the wisdom of God and the power of God:—convinced that from them alone I must draw comfort to myself, and administer comfort to my people, I will search them with diligence, attention, and fervent prayer to the Almighty, that he would guide me, by his spirit, into all necessary truth, and make me comprehend the scope and meaning of the Sacred Penmen. Nor will I neglect such other branches of knowledge, as may be necessary for understanding the Scriptures myself, explaining them to others, and promoting my usefulness as a Christian Minister.

V.

It is, without doubt, of great importance for a Christian Minister to possess a competent stock of knowledge in general, and of Scriptural knowledge in particular. But for what end is this a matter of such

such momentous concern? not merely that he may contribute to his own amusement, or even edification; but that he may perform his duty with faithfulness; that he may sincerely and affectionately impart the words of instruction, piety, consolation, and eternal life to his hearers. The ministerial work is, likewise, in various other respects, of infinite moment. Prayer, the administration of the ordinances, visiting the sick, and many other obligations besides, call for our utmost attention, assiduity, and zeal.

Will you, therefore, endeavour to discharge the several duties of the Christian Ministry with fidelity and diligence?

A N S W E R.

To feed the flock of Christ, and perform the duties incumbent on a Christian Minister, I have ever considered as a task no less difficult than important. Difficult it is, Sir, in any situation. A circumstance in my case, which delicacy forbids me to mention, but which will readily occur to every person in my hearing, increases diffidence, and renders me doubly sensible to the weight of the charge I am about to undertake. I feel my utter inability to support the dignity of a succession, for the support of which, the first rate talents would not be more than adequate: I can only answer for the sincerity of my intentions. The abilities I have, shall be employed with cheerfulness and assiduity in the cause of Christ. To God I trust for assistance and direction: to the candour of

my people. I must look for many allowances. In this dependence, I will use my best endeavours to perform the duties of my office with fidelity and diligence. Happy, if I can be, in any degree, instrumental in promoting the ends of Christ's religion, by making men wiser and better unto Salvation.

VI.

If, while we are engaged in instructing and exhorting our fellow-creatures, we ourselves should be destitute of a divine principle, and walk unworthily of our sacred profession, it would be a deplorable case indeed! Well may we tremble at the thoughts of so dreadful a situation; and earnestly solicitous should we be, not to disgrace, but adorn the name of that excellent Master to whose service we are consecrated.

Will you, therefore, endeavour, in the general tenor of your life and conversation, to behave in such a manner as becometh a Christian and a Minister.

A N S W E R.

I will endeavour, through divine assistance, to live as becomes a professor and teacher of the Gospel, praying to God, and requesting the prayers of all good men, that he would guide me by his spirit, preserve me from falling, and keep me steadfast and immovable in his service.

S I R,

SIR,

The view you have afforded of your good abilities, and serious disposition, is very pleasing. We doubt not of the sincerity of your pious resolutions; and we hope that you will be enabled, by the divine assistance, to carry them fully into execution. On our part, we shall sincerely and affectionately unite in our supplications to the author of every good and perfect gift, that an abundant blessing may be poured on your person and labours; that you may be an upright, useful, and eminent minister of Jesus Christ. In doing this, since it is not disagreeable to yourself, we shall make use of the rite of imposition of hands; with regard to which it is scarcely necessary for me, in this assembly, to add, that we pretend not to convey by it, any powers, whether extraordinary or ordinary. Indeed, it appears to have been sometimes used, in the Apostolic age, without such an intention. When St. Paul and Barnabus were separated to the particular employment of going out to the Gentiles, the Prophets and Teachers of Antioch prayed and laid their hands upon them, though they had undoubtedly before received the holy spirit. When, likewise, the seven Deacons were ordained by the Apostles, they did not receive the holy spirit at the time in which the Apostles prayed and laid hands upon them; for it was a term of their being chosen to the office, that they should be men who were previously full of the holy spirit, and of wisdom. In preserving, therefore, this apostolic practice, we only mean somewhat more expressly and solemnly to designate and mark out, to the Assem-

ably present, the persons who have chosen to devote themselves to the work of the Ministry. And while, my worthy young Brother, we pray for You, we shall pray for OURSELVES also, that we may each of us have grace of God to be found faithful. Thus may we be entitled to peace and comfort in this life; and thus, when the chief Shepherd shall appear, may we receive a crown of glory, which fadeth not away! Amen.

THE CHARGE

DELIVERED AT THE ORDINATION

OF THE

Rev. JAMES LINDSAY,

AT THE

MEETING IN MONKWELL STREET.

By the Rev. JAMES FORDYCE, D. D.

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THE CHARGE.

CONSIDERING the very important, intimate, and endearing relation, in which I had so long the pleasure of standing to this Christian Society, it would be unkind to them, and ungenerous to you, Sir, whom they have called to succeed me in that relation, if I did not take a particular interest in the present occasion, if I did not feel a more than common solicitude for your reputation, usefulness, and comfort. That you are duly sensible of the honour, which the congregation in Monkwell Street have conferred upon you, by their deliberate choice, and that you are properly affected by the solemnity, with which you have thus publicly been set apart to your sacred office as their pastor, I entertain not a doubt. In consequence of both, and of the character you have hitherto maintained, I am satisfied that you will be earnestly disposed, with God's assistance, to give them every possible proof of your faithfulness and zeal.

But of these, perhaps, you cannot in effect give a better proof, than by imitating in the course of your Ministry the practice of St. Paul, as described by himself in his second epistle to the Corinthians,

thians, the fourth chapter, and the second verse; where, after he had said, "seeing therefore we have
 " this Ministry, as we have received mercy we faint
 " not, but have renounced the hidden things of
 " dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, not handling
 " the word of God deceitfully," he adds, "but by
 " manifestation of the truth commending ourselves
 " to every man's conscience, in the sight of God"
 —mark his expressions well— "by manifestation of
 " the truth, commending ourselves to every man's
 " conscience, in the sight of God."

Here, my reverend and worthy Brother, you will, if I mistake not, learn these three great points, peculiarly deserving your attention, first, at what kind of popularity you should aim, as a Minister of the Gospel; you are to commend yourself to every man's conscience: secondly, by what means you must do this; by manifestation of the truth: and in the third place, from what principle you should thus act; in the sight of God. I am sure it will not offend you, Sir, and I hope it may not be unedifying to this assembly, if I now offer to your candour, in their presence, such imperfect hints on these topics, as I have been able to throw together, in a state of indisposition and pain, which I did not foresee when I undertook this part of the service.

As to the first point, I need not say, that you will naturally and justly seek the approbation of your hearers in general, but especially of the people with whom you are connected as their Minister. The

Preacher,

Preacher, the Pastor, who can be indifferent about his reputation or acceptance, is a wretch and a fool, and will sooner or later incur the infamy and the misery he merits. You, Sir, want not to be told, that your peace, your honour, your utility, will all depend, under God, on the character you shall be found to deserve in your function; and I am certain, you have too much worth, as well as prudence, to slight interests like these.

But observe, I beseech you, the practice of our Apostle. He commended himself to every man's conscience—to his Conscience, not to his caprice, or prejudices, or sinful passions, or foolish humours, or "itching ears," or love of flattery, or fond conceits of any kind. A popularity gained, by soothing or gratifying any of these, is poor, contemptible, wicked, impious, below the wish of an honest man, odious in the estimation of a faithful Minister. You, my friend, will disdain and detest it, by whomsoever it is acquired. "If," says the same Apostle, "I seek to please men, then am I not the servant of Jesus Christ." If he sought the favour of his fellow creatures, at the expence of his integrity, to the derogation of his office, or yet from any view ending merely in his own person, as separate from the cause he espoused, he should in that case deem himself ingrateful to the compassionate Saviour, from whom he had received such singular mercy, and unfaithful to the holy Master, who had in so extraordinary a manner called him to be an Apostle, and had during his own Ministry preached and laboured, not for applause or wealth,

wealth, or worldly objects of any sort, but "to seek and save them that were lost," to cure instead of inflaming the disorders of his hearers, to renew, and in-renewing to comfort, the hearts of men, instead of filling their heads with vain notions and delusive hopes.

But does not the very man, whose example I am holding up, declare of himself, that "he pleased all men in all things, and that he became all things to all men?" Most true; and for this spirit of accommodation he has been reproached, with a triumphant air, by those who had not the candour to study his history, nor the soul to comprehend his character. It is evident, from a fair consideration of his words and of his conduct, that in adapting himself to persons of different sects and parties, of different opinions and modes in religion and in life, he acted from motives equally pure and benevolent. It was that he might "gain some" to the love and obedience of the truth, to the laws and privileges of the kingdom of God; of that kingdom, which, as he nobly expresses it, "is not meats and drinks" consists not in forms and ceremonies, or rules and observances of a ritual nature, "but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." As to himself, he utterly disclaims any desire of partial attachment, or undue respect from his followers of whatever denomination, with every idea of dominion over their faith. "He preached not himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and himself their servant for Christ's sake." He reprobates those "who held the persons of men in admiration," whilst they

they overlooked their doctrine, or neglected their advice. With an enlargement of heart, which self-denial alone could teach him, he condemns the unreasonable prepossessions that made one say, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos." With a warmth of style that arose from the generous ardour of his soul, full of piety and humility at the same time, he adds, "who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but Ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted; Apollos watered: but God gave the increase." So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." Possessed by the same self-denying spirit, he asks on a similar occasion, "was Paul crucified for you, or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" What shall we say more? Wherever this exalted man could accommodate his instructions or his deportment to the various conceptions, respective situations, or innocent weaknesses of his hearers, without sacrificing his sincerity, or debasing his function, there he was ready to shew all the meekness and pliancy of the sweetest child, with all the courteousness and liberality of the most accomplished man. He knew that affection was not to be forced, but conciliated; that characters and occasions must be studied; that too strong a light must not be thrown into distempered eyes; that every generous allowance was to be made for the errors of education, and the circumstances of men, for their degrees of understanding, and their diversities of temper; and he considered, that the Preacher who would be "wise to win

“win souls” must be careful not to shock them without necessity—I said, without necessity. For there are cases, in which it may be absolutely unavoidable to give charitable pain; where lenity to the offender would, as in a magistrate, be cruelty to the public, and palliating the fore would, as in a surgeon, be treachery to the patient. In short St. Paul commended himself to every man’s conscience, when he could do so without violating his own. But when the honour of his Master, the dignity of his office as connected with that honour, and the interests of truth and righteousness as inseparable from both, demanded a bold defiance of obstinate adversaries, or an open rebuke of erroneous friends, no one could display a firmer mind, or a more intrepid zeal. He feared no resentment; he regarded no calumny. His principles inclined him “to please men for their good to edification,” as he has expressed it with a happy precision: but his principles likewise raised him above every base and every mean compliance.

However desirable it may be to convey wisdom through the vehicle of delight; and though you, Sir, will practise this method as often as you can, (what prudent or good natured preacher would not wish to practise it?) yet there are times when you may find it impossible; as when you are obliged by faithfulness to expose popular follies and fashionable sins, to use the language of undisguised reproof, to assume the tone of virtuous indignation, or inculcate rules of discipline and strictness to which the licence of the age is totally adverse.

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He that cannot flatter will often displease. So did St. Paul. "Am I then your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" So did St. Paul's master. "These are hard sayings: who can bear them?" exclaimed many of his disciples; and "from that time they walked no more with him:" not to speak of the persecution he endured from the worst men, because he rebuked them with freedom. If, for doing your duty, you should meet with similar treatment from some, you may regret it, chiefly on their account who betray so bad a spirit: but still you will enjoy the consciousness of your own rectitude: you will triumph in the thought, that you are "a partaker of Christ's sufferings:" you will rise in the esteem of the best people and the soundest judges; and perhaps at the very instant that others are provoked by the liberty, with which you have reproved their vices, or opposed their errors, they will feel in spite of both, that you have commended yourself to their conscience, and be forced in the secret of their hearts to confess the truth and to respect the preacher. "When Paul," says the history, "reasoned concerning righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled." The unhappy man, though armed with power, elated with flattery, and attended by the guards of his person and the ministers of his luxury, was nevertheless alarmed, confounded, and shaken through all his frame, by the thunder and lightening of the arguments, which the home felt horror of a guilty mind could not help applying where they were intended.

I trust,

I trust, Mr. Lindsay, you will never satisfy yourself with vague harangues, or visionary speculations, in the pulpit; such as carry no conviction, touch no heart, tend to make no one present better or wiser; however they may, for a moment, amuse the gaping multitude, or excite even the loudest applause from the half judging. I trust, you are of opinion, that one soul awakened, one sinner converted, one believer confirmed, a single hearer thrown back upon himself, and sent away silent, thoughtful, and anxious about his salvation, will be truer praise and a greater victory, than if crowds, turning to one another, should cry out, "What elegance! What learning! How wonderful! What an orator!" In reality, so few are qualified to pronounce on the critical merits of a sermon, or the comparative talents of the preacher, that those acclamations from the many are of no value in themselves, and will not be the object of a conscientious Minister. On the other hand, perhaps, our places of worship are seldom attended by persons so very ignorant or frivolous, that they may not, by the blessing of God, be made to feel, some time or other, the impression of a pertinent, serious, and animated discourse, addressed to their native sense of right and wrong, or to the hopes and fears of eternity implanted within them. But surely an unmeaning and indiscriminating noise of vulgar popularity, first raised by individuals, who affect to judge and to lead in those matters, however unfit for either, and then joined by the sequacious herd, is a very different thing from the internal attestation I describe. Leave those who court to obtain and boast so small a prize.

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It has been obtained and boasted by coxcombs, by dunces, by bigots, by hypocrites. "Come not thou into their secret: unto their assembly," my brother, "be not thou united." They sacrifice the honour and end of their function to the sordid idol of self-love, in the very name and temple of the Most High.

If some better men of the profession have, by capacity, zeal, and assiduity, acquired a better fame, envy not their success, detract not from their reputation, do them justice on all occasions, and "bid them, God speed." If on the other side, men possessed of equal merit, are not held in equal esteem, let them not on that account be less the objects of your respect and approbation. With regard to yourself, be assured, the only popularity that will give you solid satisfaction in youth and age, in life and death, must be derived from the hearts of those who know you best, bearing witness to the truth, importance, and usefulness of your instructions, to the affection and earnestness with which you enforce them, and to the correspondence of your conversation and deportment with all the rest. Amongst other passages of our Apostle on this subject, beside that under consideration, read and meditate his farewell discourse to the Elders of Ephesus. What magnanimity, dignity, triumph, does he there express, in a review of his Ministry, of the principles by which he was actuated, and of the fidelity with which he had commended himself to every man's conscience!

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Observe

Observe again these significant words. He does not say, to every man's understanding, or fancy, or passions, but to every man's Conscience. Were the others then to be neglected or overlooked? By no means. If the understanding were left out, or little regarded, where were sober thought, just conclusion, genuine principle, or rational conduct? If the fancy were despised or forgotten, how was attention to be effectually engaged from the generality of hearers, how was sensibility to be called forth, or kept alive, in any tolerable degree? And if there were no application to the passions, what was to interest the soul, to rouse her from her sloth in matters of spiritual concern, or to stimulate her intellectual exertions? The powers I speak of were all formed by the hand of God: they are all essential to the composition of man: they ought all therefore to be addressed in their turn, and made subservient to his improvement. They are all accordingly addressed in Scripture, with equal wisdom and energy; and to say, that any one of them should be slighted by a preacher, were petulance and futility, or ignorance and dullness in the extreme. But still I must think, that it is not sufficient to inform or satisfy the judgment, that it is not sufficient to entertain or delight the imagination; that it is not sufficient to excite some temporary movements in the affections, however pleasing or promising these may appear at the instant; since all this may be done, and yet the conscience remain untouched, and the heart uninfluenced to any valuable purpose, as before. Mere assent does not constitute

stitute vital faith; brilliant conceptions will not make any man truly wise; and strong emotions have no necessary connexion with the duties of religion, or the offices of life. A representation on the theatre may amuse, may strike, may agitate, while it lasts, but is no sooner over than it fades from the mind, without leaving there one noble sensation or one virtuous resolve. And a discourse from the pulpit may be full of argument, or description, or fervour of a certain kind, or all these together, and yet do no good—Why?—Because it may only prove what is already admitted, or please the injudicious with glittering conceits and gaudy phantoms, or raise at the moment some mechanical feelings, wonderfully flattering, and easily mistaken for devotion or benevolence; or peradventure it may unite these several effects; whilst, in reality, nothing shall come home to men's business or bosoms, to the most important interests of society, or to the mighty concerns of an everlasting existence; and the hearer is left to go away remarking on the preacher, perhaps extolling him, without being prompted to pause and reflect upon himself. As we formerly mentioned, our Apostle reasoned before Felix, till he trembled. But why did he tremble? Because the topics on which the reasoning of the preacher turned were "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," that is, the topics of all others most directly calculated to lay hold, in that alarming manner, on the conscience of a proud sensual and iniquitous governor, such as his auditor then was.

While it is your study, Sir, to let your hearers see themselves as in a mirror, take care it do not flatter. It should indeed neither magnify, nor diminish, nor exhibit any object different from the reality. Let it still "show Virtue her own feature, Vice her own image, the very age and body of the time their form and pressure." If those, to whom you hold it up with a steady determined hand, should, after viewing themselves truly reflected there, fail to profit by the discovery, like the man St. James describes, "who, beholding his natural face in a glass, goeth away and forgetteth what manner of person he is," what blemishes he should remove or lessen, what advantages he should preserve and improve, the fault is not yours: you have done what became you; and though in that instance your hearers shall have neglected your admonition, their hearts must attest your faithfulness.

Permit me, Sir, on this occasion, earnestly to recommend what our good old divines called Experimental preaching, in which I cannot but think the more enlightened part of them excelled; and that which I conceive should be joined with it, if indeed they are not one and the same, Characteristic preaching, as I would take the liberty to style it. Avoiding offensive personalities, invidious applications, illiberal censures, with all ludicrous and trivial particulars, its aim is to delineate, as opportunity serves, the principles and views, the ruling passions and incidental propensities, the different conduct, discourse, pursuits,

pursuits and tastes of good and bad men; through their various modifications and conditions; with the different ways in which they are affected by the events of providence, by the claims of religion, and by the operations of Heaven on their respective minds.

Give me the preacher, who has not formed his system merely in the school or in the closet, but has studied Christianity in the writings of the New Testament, and mankind on the theatre of the world; who is acquainted with the rules of a sound and liberal casuistry, equally removed from rigour and laxness; who avoids alike the extremes of elating his hearers into presumption, or sinking them into despair; who with a generous freedom unfolds the grace and mercy of the evangelical covenant on the one hand, and on the other states its sacred and indispensable terms with the greatest clearness and firmness, not daring to explain away or soften down a single precept of Christ, in favour to the corruptions of men, nor yet to represent his service as gloomy or severe. Give me the preacher who probes the wounded spirit to the bottom, not to irritate but to heal it, to heal it radically, not to palliate the sore; who is solicitous to relieve the doubting yet honest mind, to strengthen the virtuous yet feeble resolution, to recal the unhappy wanderer from the road of truth or duty, and “to comfort the mourner in “Zion;” but who at the same time is too sincere “to speak peace where God has spoken no peace;” who on the contrary bears down upon the self-righteous and self-deluded sinner with a torrent of conviction,

vision, that "shall sweep away the refuge of lies." Give me the preacher who knows how to paint the shades and gradations of vice and impiety, to expose the guilt and misery of both, to contrast the opposite states of sin and holiness, to distinguish between wilful transgression and involuntary frailty, between growth and decay, between strength and weakness, in the spiritual life; above all to describe, with skill, and with feeling, the nature and excellence, the rise and progress, the workings, conflicts, and victories of the divine principle in the soul of a sincere believer, till it arrives at perfection in the regions of immortality—give me such a preacher, and I will embrace him with love and veneration, to whatever communion he belongs, I will honour and applaud him as "a Master in Israel," and "a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

Observe once more on this head, that the Apostle speaks not of commending himself to the conscience of any particular man or class of men, but to Every man's conscience without exception. He was, in the best sense of the phrase, a Catholic preacher. He no sooner shook off the fetters of Jewish prejudice, than his affections expanded to the whole human race; from a furious bigot he became an ardent philanthropist. The spirit of Christianity, like the light of the sun that animates all nature, kindled in his bosom a flame of universal benevolence. He considered his labours as a kind of general property, "I am a debtor," cries he, "both to the Greeks" and

“ and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the “ unwise.” How liberal a sentiment! How different from that which seems to have possessed those pagan philosophers, who confined their doctrines to the rich, the learned, and the great, looking on the rest of mankind as beneath their notice; perhaps from a supposition, that they could add but little to their consequence, or their fame!

St. Paul proceeded on higher grounds. He knew that his master had preached the Gospel to the poor, to the illiterate, to the despised of this world; and had commanded it to be preached, by his Apostles and Ministers “ to all nations;” that “ with God “ there was no respect of persons;” that “ he would “ have all men every where to repent, and come to “ the knowledge of the truth;” that as salvation was equally designed for all, who were willing to accept of it on the terms proposed, so it should be equally offered to all; that the soul of every man was infinitely precious, in the estimation of his Maker and Redeemer; and that every man’s conscience was formed with a power of enjoying the most exalted satisfaction, or of suffering the deepest anguish, both here and hereafter, “ according to the deeds done in “ the body whether they be good or evil.” Such considerations will help us to account for the comprehensive and impartial zeal of our Apostle; and such considerations will prevent you, Sir, from ever intentionally neglecting any part of your audience, be their capacity, condition, or character, what it may. Impressed with such considerations, you will

be far from studying the taste, or seeking the approbation, of your more enlightened, and refined, or critical hearers only, without regard to the bulk of the people: you will be far from palliating the vices of the wealthy, any more than those of the necessitous: you will readily "condescend to men of low estate;" as, without flattering, you will show due respect to better rank. Let me observe by the way, that your attention to virtuous obscurity will be amply rewarded in the very act. Amongst persons of humble station in this place, you will find those who are entitled to much esteem for their native sense, modest worth, and sober unpretending piety. I shall always remember them with affection, and reflect with pleasure on the agreeable and edifying hours I pass in their company. The world knows them not, nor are they ambitious of its knowing them. But the most valuable metals have been frequently discovered, where they were least expected.

With many preachers it is but too common to forget the grand distinction of righteous and wicked, that divides mankind; compared to which all other distinctions are trifling and vain. Of course they address themselves to their hearers without discrimination, and consequently without effect. Many too seem to think only of the Saints, and to dwell exclusively on their peculiar privileges, as if they alone were present; or as if the Sinners that mixed with them deserved no regard; or as if the former were subject to no snares, no deviations, or self-deceit. Of many likewise it may be remarked, when
they

they speak of the latter, that by exaggerating their guilt, confounding their characters, and not allowing them any degree of virtue or of praise, they either fill them with despair of amendment, or lead them to harden their hearts against representations which appear so unjust.

Let impartiality, my dear Sir, be your constant rule. Consider the word of the Lord to the Prophet as directed to you : “ cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.” Boldly remind the professors of religion, that neither soundness of belief, nor strictness of appearance, nor solemnity of discourse, nor the most numerous or specious forms of devotion, nor the warmest attachment to any particular system or sect, nor yet the highest pretensions to I know not what extraordinary emotions and extacies, can ever sanctify falsehood, or fraud, malignity, arrogance, or selfishness. Boldly remind them, that if they are guilty of these things, all the rest will only serve to encrease their condemnation tenfold, and to cast the foulest reproach on “ that worthy name” which they most unworthily assume. With equal boldness on the other hand, tell the men of the world, that the parade of sentiment, the punctilio of honour, or even the frequent display of what they call Good nature, will but ill atone for vice and prophaneness. Nor fail to warn, with unreserved freedom, the idle and the giddy, against trusting to their supposed innocence, because “ they run not to the same excess
“ of

“ of riot” with the debauched and the profligate. Inculcate upon them again and again, that an insignificant life is utterly unbecoming reasonable beings; and that no conduct, which has not principle for its guide, will avail in the hour of sorrow, on the bed of death, or at the last tribunal.

But whilst you are firm and courageous in admonishing all, see that you be candid too and discreet; tempering the fervour of zeal, “ with the meekness “ of wisdom;” and be assured, that so long as you thus hold up the standard of a solid, unaffected, and noble piety, there are few, very few, of any description within the reach of your voice, who will not be convinced at their hearts, that your cause is good, and that, in maintaining it without fear, and without partiality, you act a manly and an honourable part.

Which brings us to consider more directly, in the next place, by what means you shall commend yourself to every man’s conscience. And this we learn at once, from the practice of our Apostle. It is “ by “ manifestation of the truth”—not of the truth in general; your business here is not to make men scholars, but christians—not of this, or that, or the other particular truth of religion, in exclusion of the rest: you are to “ declare the whole counsel of God,” as far as you understand it, and “ to keep back no “ thing that is profitable.” Your concern is with the truth at large, with “ the truth,” so called by way of eminence, that is, with “ the word of God”
mentioned

mentioned immediately before our text; but more especially with "the truth as it is in Jesus, the faithful and the true witness," who came from the God of truth, to reveal his will for the salvation of man. Your concern is with that truth which was published by Christ and his Apostles, confirmed by prophecies and miracles, above all by the resurrection of its Author from the dead, agreeably to his own predictions; with that truth which has stood the test of seventeen hundred years and upwards, maintaining its ground in the most enlightened ages and countries, after the fullest and freest enquiries, against the scoffs of infidelity, and the flames of persecution, amidst the blindness of bigots, and the wrangling of artful or ignorant priests—what shall I say more?—with that truth which has made innumerable souls free, by delivering them from the bondage of error and corruption, "into the glorious liberty of the sons of God." In a word, your concern is with the whole extensive system of leading facts, divine doctrines, moral precepts, evangelical ordinances, precious promises, and tremendous threatenings, contained in the New Testament, and constituting altogether that admirable superstructure which Christianity has raised, partly on the foundation of the Old, as predicting and prefiguring it, and partly on that of Natural Religion, whose principles it corroborates, and whose defects it supplies. Such, my reverend Brother, is in substance the truth you are called to manifest fairly and openly, without pervarication or disguise, but not without distinction,

or

or a proper regard to the matter, the composition, the style, and the delivery, of your discourses,

1. With respect to the Matter; it should certainly be comprehensive and diversified, as the field that lies before you. Survey it for a moment. Does it not present to view whatever can be conceived most amiable or awful in the attributes, will, and counsels of the Supreme, or most wonderful, affecting, and instructive in the dispensations of his Providence, or most interesting to man in his single or social capacity, as a mortal or immortal, a fallen or redeemed, a guilty or pardoned, a sinful or sanctified creature, as a rational, moral, and accountable agent? Does it not lay open his origin, his frame, his wishes, and his wants, with his total insufficiency for his own happiness? Does it not discover the errors of his understanding, the wanderings of his imagination, the tyranny of his passions, the disorders of his heart, and his utter inability to recover himself, without a superior interposition, and heavenly aid? Does it not set forth the deformity of vice, and the beauty of holiness, with their respective fruits, both present and future, the vanity of the world, the shortness of life, the certainty of death, the solemnities of judgment, and the infinite magnitude of eternal things? In fine, does it not display "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ," the divine perfections of his character, the sacred simplicity of his doctrines, the purity and benignity of his laws, the sublime and beautiful graces of his conversation and demeanour, his astonishing humiliation, meritorious sufferings,

ings, and triumphant resurrection, with the greatness of his consequent exaltation, the power of his almighty spirit, the wisdom and mildness of his administration, the constitution, order, privileges, and extent of his church, the glories of his second coming, and, to say the whole at once, his all-sufficiency to save a lapsed creation?—What a field for the Christian Preacher! How vast, how various, and manifold! Where, alas, is the man that can do it justice? But are not they to be pitied, who for want of talents, or taste, or liberality, or feeling, or industry, or zeal, circumscribe their views to a few particular spots, which they go over and over perpetually, without variation, and without end; instead of—what?—instead of expatiating delightfully amidst its treasures, and improving them by turns, for their own benefit, and that of others? Would you call such men “faithful stewards of the manifold “ grace of God?” Would you call such men “able “ Ministers of the New Testament?” Is this that “manifestation of the truth,” by which the apostle Paul commended himself to every man’s conscience? You will not, you cannot think it.

Surely, Sir, you are better acquainted with that complex instrument, the human mind, than to suppose you should strike only some of its strings; when by a larger compass, and greater command, you may bring out so much more expression and harmony. And for your Bible, you know and love it too well, to forget, that “all Scripture is given by “ inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine,
“ for

“ for reproof, for correction, for instruction in
 “ righteousness; that the man of God may be per-
 “ fect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

Those preachers appear to me both defective, who dwell incessantly on the depravity of nature, and our justification by faith, or on the dignity of man, and the sufficiency of virtue; treating of either in a loose and declamatory, or in a dry and metaphysical, manner; so as to leave the boundaries of truth, and the obligations of morality, undetermined; or what is worse, to set the doctrines and duties of religion at variance. Of all heresies, indeed, the most dangerous and pernicious seems to be that of crying up it's doctrines, in prejudice to it's duties, or in neglect of them; that of depreciating the importance of a holy life, or touching on it in a feeble, reluctant, and transient manner. Thus in effect, “ Christ is made the minister of sin,” the grace of God, offered in the gospel, is perverted into an engine of corruption, and bad men are buoyed up with a groundless confidence into fatal security. If Christianity be not calculated to render it's disciples virtuous and happy, what valuable end can it serve? But if it be, as it doubtless is, calculated to do both at the same time, what shall we say of those whose doctrine tends to represent it as an encouragement to live in vice, and yet to hope for Heaven? They must be horribly depraved, or strangely deluded. On the other side, it argues very little acquaintance with the heart, or the history of man, to imagine that he may be effectually reformed by mere
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precepts, however just, or by moral harangues, however fine, independently of those great principles and motives, which must lead him from himself to God, for pardon, assistance, and eternal life, in the road of an unfeigned repentance, an humble trust, and an unreserved obedience.—But why insist on a point so plain? You, Sir, will never wish to “put asunder what God hath joined.” You will preach faith, “without which it is impossible to please him”; but what faith? That only “which worketh by love, purifieth the heart, overcometh the world, and keepeth the commandments.” And you will preach morality; but what morality? That alone which I have now mentioned, as the fruit and operation of genuine faith; that alone which makes men sincerely and uniformly good, from choice, from principle, from a sense of duty, from the inspiring prospect of God’s approbation through a blessed immortality.

In this kind of preaching you will be confirmed, not only by St. Paul’s own practice, which I need not describe to you, but by his emphatical charge to his beloved pupil, the young Evangelist Timothy. His words are indeed remarkable, and never to be forgotten: “This is a faithful saying; and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who believe in God be careful to maintain good works.”

Trust me, Sir, this practical manifestation of the truth will do more to convince the conscience, and to warm the heart, than all the scholastic notions,
and

and philosophical refinements, in the world. They are too remote from life, from action, from affection, from the design of God in forming the soul for the love and enjoyment of that which is his image and his glory, divine truth. From this bright inestimable object the soul, indeed, is prone to be seduced, by appetite, passion, and deceit: she then wanders in darkness and wretchedness, pursuing phantoms that flatter, disappoint, and distract her; till it pleases God to open her eyes, and show her again her first companion and original friend. Happy, if yet disposed to return! For though she must expect to be reproached, for having relinquished so wise and so venerable an associate, still if it is not her own fruit, an everlasting union may take place; and oh, what tranquillity and joy will be the result!—How honourable for you, dear Sir, if you are often made the instrument of bringing about this blessed correspondence!—Shall I tell you what I esteem the very triumph of the pulpit? Suppose that you address your audience on topics of the greatest utility and moment; such, for example, as draw deep into the deceitfulness of sin, the emptiness of the world, the maladies of the heart, the remedies provided by the Gospel, the manner of applying them, the necessity of a new nature and a divine life, the worth of the soul, the need of salvation, and the importance of eternity, with many others which might be named. And now, suppose, that whilst you are thus engaged, time after time, your hearers are arrested, suspended, fixed, turned inward upon their own minds, and irresistably led to say,

say, every one for himself, " I am the man concerned
 " in these things : these things demand my profound-
 " est regard, my most solemn consideration, my
 " immediate improvement : they are the words of
 " truth and soberness : by the blessing of God, I
 " will ponder and apply them, without a moment's
 " delay."—I call this the triumph of the pulpit.

If this triumph is not instantly followed with all the visible effects, which might be wished or hoped, deem it not, therefore, of no consequence. Persevere, and repeat it as frequently as you can. Though it is not your province to change the heart, still it may be of use to alarm the conscience. Though the liveliest fears of that apprehensive power are not always productive of amendment, they often contribute to it; and where they do not operate a thorough conversion, there is reason to believe they, notwithstanding, in many cases, check the progress of vice, and incite a variety of actions, which, though not directly virtuous, are yet profitable to men, and as such, deserving of praise. It is remarkable, that where the truth is manifested with fidelity, the hearer shall often apply to himself, as aimed at him in particular, descriptions and admonitions, by no means pointed to any one individual, but only thrown out by way of general reproof or illustration, from the preacher's knowledge of life and manners. " A word " spoken in season," without any peculiar direction by the speaker, like " a bow drawn at a venture," shall pierce to the soul some conscious sinner, with a wound that nothing can heal, but the salutary influ-

ence of religion. To change the metaphor, the sparks of conviction, which have lain, perhaps, for many years latent in the transgressor's bosom, shall on some unsuspected occasion, by the powerful coruscations of divine truth, like lightening from Heaven, be kindled into a fire, that no pride or depravity can extinguish, but that will continue to burn inwardly, 'till it has either wholly consumed " the " old man which is corrupt," or at least destroyed some of those " deceitful lusts" or bad passions, that were hurtful to society, or would have led into deeper ruin.

In thus recommending to you more immediately " the manifestation of the truth" with plainness, as it is contained in the sacred writings, or connected with them, do I mean, that you may neglect any advantages or aids to be derived from general knowledge, polite literature, or the rules of rhetoric? Far otherwise. I wish you, Sir, to study all these very diligently. St. Paul was himself knowing, polite, and eloquent: nor did that Christian Apostle scruple to quote heathen poets; neither can I at times help supposing, that he caught a portion of his fire from some of the ancient orators, a Pericles, perhaps, or a Demosthenes; so strongly does he resemble them in their ardent style, and impetuous manner! You cannot cultivate too carefully your acquaintance with the best authors of antiquity, those justly approved models of good sense, fine writing, and genuine taste. If, beside them, you are conversant with the most valuable writings of the moderns,

derns, in history, poetry, morals, philosophy, sciences, and arts, your mind will be more and more opened and enriched; you will acquire a greater compass and variety of ideas, with a larger store of images and allusions, to illustrate, enliven, and adorn them. Still, however, let "the men of your council" be Moses and the Prophets, the Evangelists and Apostles, with those pious and learned persons of different ages, who have entered most fully into their meaning and spirit. When it is said, that "Apollon was an eloquent man," it is added, "and mighty in the Scriptures." But whilst for every reason you search them with peculiar attention, fail not to join a close observation of the world, of the age you live in, and especially of the people with whom you are personally concerned. If to all you add a strict examination of your own heart, and an intimate experience of the power and sweetness of religion, as a vital principle within you, need I say, that you will possess "a treasure, from whence" to bring forth things new and old," adapted to every case and capacity; that you will be qualified to set the most important points in the most striking lights, and impress them on your hearers with the deepest feeling?

So much for the matter of your instructions. It is to be comprehensive and various: but they are to turn chiefly on those views that are at once evidently scriptural and rational, alike serious and practical, pointed to the conscience, applicable to life, and connected with salvation.

2. Let us now say something of their Style. If manifestation of the truth be your object, you will consider perspicuity of style as of the first importance. But clear language will chiefly depend on clear conceptions. At least, accuracy of thinking will contribute to accuracy of writing and of speaking. You will not, however, stop here. The present age demands elegance as well as correctness; and you have some hearers that will not be satisfied without it. As to those miserable bunglers in the pulpit, and their miserable admirers, who with no less ignorance than petulance, decry the beauties of diction, and the graces of elocution, they only merit contempt mingled with pity. The Preacher from the throne "sought to find out acceptable words," and compares the sayings of the wise to "apples of gold in pictures of silver." The graceful and pointed words of him, who "spoke as never man spoke," astonished his hearers, and disarmed his adversaries. Apollos, we have seen, is celebrated in Scripture as "an eloquent man;" and as to St. Paul, what person of any taste does not know, that however he disclaimed, as became an Apostle of Christ, what he calls, "the words of man's wisdom," that is, the vain philosophy, and artful sophistry, so prevalent in his days, he was himself an orator of the first rank, full of force and elevation, with a marvellous career of mind, and torrent of style, by which he confounded and overwhelmed the enemies of the truth, but which he could restrain and moderate when he thought proper, in such a manner as to temper the whole into the sweetest persuasion. It were

were easy indeed to shew, that the Scriptures in general exhibit all the diversified figures and energies of the truest eloquence, I mean that, which not only satisfies the judgment, and delights the imagination, but penetrates the conscience and goes home to the heart. There is undoubtedly, as there ought to be, great simplicity in many parts of the inspired volumes. But what then? It is a beautiful simplicity, that has nothing in it silly, flat, or tame. It is always natural, often tender and affecting, often too the companion of sublimity, and not seldom its parent. Religious truth is indeed a venerable form. They disgrace her dignity who cover her with tatters, or clothe her in a mean garb; as those profane her purity who trick her up in a flaunting attire, or disguise her chaste and serious countenance with artificial colouring, and frivolous airs. In both ways it must be owned, the Ministry has been often brought into contempt, and the cause of piety exposed by those who profess to plead it. But, perhaps, nothing degrades the pulpit so much as low phrases, little witticisms, trifling stories, childish conceits, and gross vulgarisms. I am sure you will carefully avoid them. You find nothing of this sort in the sermons of Christ or his Apostles. Let none pretend, that it is necessary by way of accommodation to the inferior orders of the people. Christ and his Apostles, in addressing men of the same condition, did not judge it necessary, or they would have practised it. Are the preachers I speak of, more wise or compassionate than our great Master, and his inspired Ministers? That the people, even of the most com-

mon classes, if accustomed to a good style, and decent manner, would be more thoroughly pleased, more soundly instructed, and more truly edified, I have not the least doubt.

Happily for you, Sir, your mind was early tintured by a classical education, which you cannot have failed to improve, by being employed for a course of years in communicating the same advantage to others. When I mention this, I take it for granted, that from these useful labours you have brought with you habits of kind affection for youth in general, and benevolent solicitude for their culture in a higher sense. To you therefore, with peculiar propriety on that account, I may recommend my dear young friends now committed to your pastoral care; and I do recommend them accordingly, with the warmest wishes for their improvement under your pious instructions. Forgive me, if, in the fervour of my heart on a subject that always lay near it, "I even charge you before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom," to watch over so precious a charge with unwearied vigilance, beset as they are by such temptations, at such an age, in such a metropolis. Feed these lambs of the flock with knowledge. Conduct them to that Shepherd, who will carry them in his bosom. Caution them against trusting in themselves, or in the world, wherever their best interests are at stake. Point out to them their danger and their duty. Teach them in what way they may escape the one, and by what strength

strength they may perform the other; whilst you cherish in them, by every gentle and engaging method, those sacred principles of truth, which alone can make them wise, or keep them virtuous. As yet their consciences are tender and awake. Their parents will bless you for your friendly endeavours; and when their parents are laid in the dust, they will stand up in their places to adorn religion, and support it's interests. They will be an honour to your Ministry; and peradventure—they may still remember his, who first shewed them the path to Heaven.—But to return from this digression, shall I presume,

3. To offer a few hints respecting the Composition of your discourses? First of all then, aim not at crowding into any single sermon, such an extent or variety of matter, as would hinder your giving the several particulars their due weight or necessary illustration; as would perplex the minds, or burden the memories, of more common hearers, and so hurry their attention from one part to another, as to prevent their comprehending clearly, or feeling sensibly, any of the numerous topics that pass in such rapid succession. Sermons intended for the closet, where they may be read at leisure, studied, and read again, will no doubt admit of more diversity and compass. But for general use, it may be best to select on each subject a few important points, distinct from one another, yet so connected as to form a whole, and to be so managed that they may throw reciprocal and growing light on the leading truth, or truths, meant

to be explained, inculcated, and left with full impression upon the audience. In doing this, avoid too many subdivisions. They look formal and scholastic. They are apt to run into each other. They fritter away the subject. They break the force and current of the composition. They embarrass the hearer, and distract his recollection.

The textual method of preaching, and likewise the practical expounding of Scripture, will often be highly acceptable and instructive. But how both may be practised with most advantage, or indeed any other mode of composition for the pulpit, I pretend not particularly to direct. Different men will be most successful in pursuing different modes, according to the apprehensions of their respective auditories, or their own peculiar manner of conceiving the subjects that come before them.

But in religious addresses, of whatever form, you, my friend, will probably be of opinion, that minute criticisms, nice distinctions, school subtleties, "questions of doubtful disputation, and oppositions of science falsely so called," minister but little "to godly edifying," and must appear, at best, but ingenious trifling to judicious hearers, while they idly amuse the merely curious, and waste those invaluable moments that should be devoted to so much better purposes. Nor will you deem a display of erudition very often necessary, where the great point is not to make men learned, but good. Yet less will you think it right, to scatter on every topic a profusion

profusion of flowers, which, in fact, would only overlay and obscure it; to weaken or puzzle the belief of doctrines, sufficiently plain and acknowledged, by superfluous arguments, or laboured investigations; or, finally, to load your discourses with heaps of indigested quotations from Scripture. With regard to the last of these, I need not tell you, it is by a very different application of "the word of God," that it will generally be found "quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and a discernuer of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Least of all will you be disposed to give your compositions the tone of what is called Religious Controversy; which, except on very particular occasions, when it may become necessary, could answer no other end, than to magnify the unessential difference of sects and parties, and to inflame them against one another, instead of removing their mutual prejudices, and uniting their hearts in the bond of peace.

But whilst, in composing your discourses, you exclude from them whatever would obstruct or impair their acceptance and utility, I would not have you lay any unnatural restraint on your imagination, if, as I hope, you are possessed of that power. I wish you to give it flight, on all proper occasions. Let it "mount up with wings, as eagles" gazing on the sun. Let the intellectual and immortal sun of divine truth, illuminate, warm, and guide you in

your ascent. But lest at any time you should be dazzled by an excess of splendour, in the more intense contemplation of that glorious luminary, and wander into visionary regions, beyond the sphere of life and nature, let judgment and taste be your inseparable companions. They will prevent you from losing yourself in wild conceits, and puerile fancies, wholly repugnant to the purposes of sound and manly instruction. But let not the saturnine remarks of cold or phlegmatic critics damp your spirit, or chill your ardour, so long as these are honest and well-directed. What, if on their account, you should undergo the charge of religious enthusiasm, so formidable and obnoxious in this sceptical age? You will remember, that without a glow in the mind, bordering on rapture, and an ambition to excel, which animates and fires the human faculties, nothing eminent or great is to be attained in any profession, in those professions especially, whose object is to delight, to persuade, to move. If this be enthusiasm, it is a laudable one, and no where more becoming than on subjects of religion, the most interesting and exalting of all others.

4. Permit me further to remind you, that were your matter ever so good and proper, your style and composition ever so admirable, the effect of all would be greatly counteracted by an unhappy Delivery. It is indeed piteous to reflect, how often discourses, the best perhaps in every other respect, have been enfeebled, not to say marred, even to the most willing and intelligent hearers, by a frigid look, or
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languid air, or ungracious manner, in the preacher; or else by a disagreeable hesitation, or a drawling tone, or a whining sameness, or a slovenly pronunciation, or something unnatural, inelegant, awkward, or inexpressive, I cannot tell what. For the defects in elocution are numberless, and though sometimes scarce to be described, yet so unpleasant to the eyes, or ears, or feelings of the more discerning, as, in spite of their utmost candour, to impede exceedingly the delight and edification that might have otherwise been received.—Let me caution you, likewise, against too hasty an utterance; a fault very incident to lively speakers, but which does not well accord with the gravity and solemnity of the pulpit, is apt to leave the hearers behind, and sometime to betray the most accurate preachers, if not much on their guard, into mistakes that were better avoided, and would readily be prevented by a more deliberate enunciation.—Allow me to add on this occasion, that you cannot study too diligently, the accent, emphasis, and idiom of the English language. It is a piece of respect you owe to your English auditors, and will contribute more to your appearing with advantage, and speaking with energy, than some of our countrymen will easily believe.—Much might be said, if there were time for it, on the natural, significant, and graceful modulation of the voice in the pulpit; in other words, to show how the ideas and emotions of the preacher may be expressed, by living sounds, with truth and force, variety and harmony, gravity and spirit at the same instant. In reality, the effects of such a modulation are incredible. In what relates

lates to the exterior of eloquence, there is not perhaps any part of so great importance, and yet so little understood in modern times. The ancient orators seem, above all others, to have studied the regulation of the voice, in public speaking, and to have ascribed peculiar power to this engine.

Without entering into particulars on the article of delivery, I am inclined to believe " the best rule for a preacher, is to feel what he speaks, and to speak as he feels; like a man of sense and probity delivering his mind with clearness, freedom, and earnestness, to those about him, on a matter interesting both to himself and to them."

With this view, Sir, let me advise you, before you enter the pulpit, to steep your thoughts in your subject, if such a phrase may be allowed, till they are all over tinged with it. Or if you like the allusion better, give yourself up to the impulse of your theme. Let it take full possession of your soul, and warm your noblest affections. Then you will speak with true simplicity, and native unstudied animation, as becomes " the lively oracles of God;" you will " speak because you believe," and because you love the truths which you inculcate. What will be the consequence? Your hearers, seeing you in earnest, will be pleased with your sincerity, touched by your sensibility, and open to your arguments and advice. There is in pious fervour, if attended with discretion, and supported by sense, a power of persuasion not easily resisted; and I presume it will

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generally, if not always, be found, that the most serious and affectionate Minister is the most beloved and the most useful Minister, though he may not be followed with the greatest numbers, or with the loudest applause.

He whose manner is cold or indifferent has certainly, but little room to expect, that his instructions however good or important in themselves, shall often be heard with much attention, or entertained with much regard. Whatever some foolish refiners may pretend, the more a preacher appears to feel what he says, the more he will affect his audience; and that preacher will commonly appear to feel most who actually does so. His voice, his countenance, his gesture, will concur in manifesting his sensations; and if from want of skill or care, from a wrong taste, or unlucky habits, he should fall into something less graceful, proper, or pleasing, still the marks of warmth and earnestness, that accompany all he utters, from the genuine workings of his soul, will, on hearers of any candour, make an impression which the most correct or elegant address, if unanimated and unfeeling, can never produce. By the way, how comes it about, that many preachers, who on a variety of topics in conversation, and upon other occasions, deliver themselves naturally, forcibly, and agreeably, no sooner enter the pulpit, than, as if some incantation had seized them in a moment, they assume looks, and tones, and a manner, the very reverse? Would this be possible, were they thoroughly penetrated, and roused, by the important objects that then employ

employ them? I should think, not.—In short, Sir, when your heart flies out into your discourse, the hearts of your hearers will fly out to meet it. They will love you as their friend, no less than respect you as their pastor; and by so zealous and so faithful a manifestation of the truth, you will commend yourself to every man's conscience, in the sight of God.—Mark this last idea of the Apostle on the present subject—"In the sight of God." What a motive! What a principle! How encouraging and inspiring to a conscientious Minister!

It was the third point I proposed for your consideration*. The influence which a powerful sense of the Omnipresent Deity, and an intimate correspondence with him, will have on your general conduct, on your studies, on your ministrations, on your addresses to him in public, as the mouth of your people, and in your private intercourse with them, as their counsellor, comforter, and friend, and in fine the happiness which must result to yourself from the whole, I wished briefly to represent. Not that I suppose you to be ignorant of these things, or that I apprehend them necessary to be pressed upon you; but only that I might "stir up your pure mind by

* Here, the time being elapsed, and the preacher exhausted, he waved this part of his plan, and concluded with a few sentences. But perhaps the serious reader will forgive his publishing, at the desire of some respectable judges who heard the rest, what he had prepared on that head, though he was prevented from delivering it.

“ way of remembrance,” from a solicitude to see you excel in whatever can contribute to your usefulness and felicity.

The principles you early imbibed, and the reputation you have uniformly preserved, make it, I am confident, wholly needless to caution you against open immorality, or secret vice. But you are not ignorant, that more than mere decency or sobriety is required in the character of a Christian Minister. You are not ignorant, that you must be “ an example to the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” The Scripture commands it; and the laws of your profession give the world a right to expect it. The world indeed is apt to expect, at least to require, too much from persons of our function; forgetting that “ we are men of like passions” with others; or rather willing to find an apology for sin in the frailties of those who condemn it, as if we pretended to angelical perfection. But still it is certain, that we are bound by every rule of consistency and propriety, to study a peculiar elevation of mind and sanctity of manners. And how are these to be acquired or maintained? By living, by thinking, by acting, as in the presence of God. “ Walk before me,” said the Lord to Abraham, “ and be thou perfect;” that is, as righteous and pure as the condition of mortality admits.

A communion so sublime, by often calling forth the principles of piety into act, and winding up the
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soul to it's most pathetic keys, will prevent that languor and dullness, which are ready to steal upon it, from a constant familiarity with grave subjects, will preserve you from the infrigidating power of surrounding indifference, and keep alive in your mind a particular sensibility that will render the impressions of religion more vivid, and its motives more efficacious. But I must leave you, Sir, to conceive the influence, which these will have on your deportment and intercourse with society; and I must leave your people to tell, how peculiarly engaging the truth will appear, where they shall see it manifested in the life and conversation of their Minister, no less than in his sermons. A conduct like this indeed will be more convincing, persuasive, eloquent, than all these put together; at the same time that it will give every one of them an additional force and attraction. It will be a living sermon, animated with the very spirit of piety and goodness.

I will not now attempt to describe the difference perceived, by persons of discernment, between that preacher, whose mouth speaks out of the abundance of his heart, with warmth and pathos, and whose practice is a lively copy of his doctrine, between that preacher, I say, and him who only performs his exercises in the pulpit as a task, and who behaves out of it, as if he had never appeared there, or as if he thought himself no way concerned to enforce his precepts by his example. The difference in fact is so great, that it may be felt much more easily than expressed. And it will, in a higher or lower degree,
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be felt by every serious mind, as devotion is cultivated by the former preacher, or neglected by the latter.

Devotion, or fellowship with God, in the rational and genuine acceptation of these words, I consider as the life and soul of the Ministerial function, or if you will, as a kind of presiding and inspiring genius, that gives it direction, vigour, and sublimity, where nature has imparted tolerable talents, and where education has improved them.

I mentioned the influence it will have on your Studies in the way of your profession, as well as on your general conduct and character in that respect. By placing yourself, if I may so speak, under the more immediate illumination of the "Father of Lights," and with the earnestness of faith, asking wisdom from him "who giveth to all liberally," you are assured that you shall receive it. And this very assurance will cheer and quicken your honest endeavours to improve in practical knowledge, and "all spiritual understanding." Then, by "seeing light in God's light," to use the elevated language of the Psalmist, you will be enabled to view divine objects through a divine medium; which will represent them, as they really are, so superlatively fair and glorious, that you cannot but be inflamed with admiration, and eager to paint them with affection and force. Your mental eye, glancing from earth to Heaven, from Heaven to earth, will behold such prospects of all that is most important to man, as shall not only im-

press your own mind with the deepest seriousness, but also dispose and qualify you to exhibit them in the most striking manner to others. Having, as it is expressed by St. John, "an unction from the holy one, and knowing all things," connected with the noblest exercises and sweetest pleasures of the soul, you will diffuse through your discourses a correspondent unction, a certain happy mixture, or high flavour of piety, peculiarly agreeable to the better part of your hearers. Such, indeed, can very readily perceive the wide distance between a teacher of religion, who recommends it by considerations drawn from the fund of his own experience, and one who borrows his arguments only from a common-place theology: just as it is easy for a man of feeling and observation, to distinguish the sentiments of a real friend, on the subject of that beautiful and exalted union, from the talk of a mere pretender, who never knew its charm.

What shall I say farther of the animating influence, which your faculties will derive from that first and best principle of true devotion, a sovereign desire to please God, by doing good to his creatures? If, for the honour of preserving a state, or even defending an individual, or perhaps gaining but an inconsiderable advantage to a client, the orators of ancient days, after acquiring with infinite assiduity the richest stores of knowledge, and studying with no less care the highest models of style and elocution, ransacked their memories, and worked up their imaginations to a pitch of enthusiasm, that often transported

ported their hearers ;—surely the Christian orator, who wishes to deserve the name, will judge no application and no effort within his power, too much for the glory of being “ a fellow worker with God,” in the salvation of men.

You, my reverend Brother, will not wonder, if these last words call up to my remembrance the ever venerable image of your and my Master, “ Jesus Christ, and him crucified,” whom our Apostle preached with such distinguished zeal, as “ the wisdom of God, and the power of God to salvation.” When you contemplate the attributes of the Almighty, as displayed with transcendant lustre in the person of his Son, and in the work of redemption executed by him ; when you survey the inestimable benefits flowing from it, through time and eternity, to a degenerate world, and reflect on the consolations and the hopes which you yourself immediately derive from the same source ;—when you feel your mind warmed and raised by views like these, in hours of devout meditation, with what gratitude will you devote your studies, your labours, your life to the service of so meritorious a master ! With what ardour will you come forth from your retirement, fraught “ with the blessings of the gospel of peace !”

You have this day, amongst other points of importance, been very properly interrogated concerning your faith in Christianity ; and “ you have professed “ a good profession before many witnesses.” From your solemn declarations, so clearly and evangelical,

I am convinced you will never join that unnatural brood of preachers, if preachers they may be called, who affect to cry up the precepts of morality as all in all, but seem "ashamed of the gospel of Christ," though the only system that has ever secured to those precepts full respect, and uniform obedience, from such as cordially embrace it. The men I speak of either wholly sink the honours of it's Divine Author, whom "God hath exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour," the Mediator, Ruler, and Judge of mankind, or they mention his blessed name with reluctance, and treat the peculiar doctrines of his religion, if indeed they vouchsafe to introduce them, in a style that has "no relish of salvation in it." I suppose they are afraid of being laughed at by the sceptics of the age, were they to proclaim those "good tidings of great joy," that inspired the heavenly host with harmony and gratulation, that had been foreseen by rejoicing patriarchs, predicted by enraptured prophets, desired by expecting nations; that had employed the counsels of Heaven from the foundation of the world; to prepare for which it's revolutions had long conspired, and to propagate which through a wondering universe, was the business and the boast of Evangelists and Apostles!

When I call to mind the disciples of Socrates, who gloried in publishing the doctrines, and recording the virtues of that truly great and extraordinary man, I cannot but love them for their affection and fidelity to their master, no less than I admire them for their writings; as on the other hand I am offended,

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not merely at the defect of faith or of devotion, but at the defect of taste, of sensibility, of consistency, in the characters I have been describing. To me, indeed, the disciples of Socrates appear to have excelled them in all respects. Among the rest, they were much more devout: they expressed themselves in a manner much more delightful; and in many things the philosophy of Plato coincides very happily with that of Christ. From Plato, from Xenophon, and the other respectable lights of heathen antiquity, you will never scruple to borrow a wise or a pious sentiment. But still you will look upon them, in comparison, as inferior stars, that “hide their diminished heads” before the splendour of “the sun of righteousness.”

I mean not by these remarks, for which I make no apology, to deny that there may be very honest and virtuous men in the profession, who still retain a degree of reverence for the Founder of Christianity, as they are pleased to call him; though from some peculiar cast of mind, or unhappy turn of books and conversation (unhappy I must needs think it,) their reverence seems far from being exalted; and if we may conclude from the tone of their discourses, they are not much disposed to adopt the language of St. Paul, where he says to the Corinthians, “the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again;” or where the same

Apostle tells the Ephesians, "for this cause I
 "bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Je-
 "sus Christ, of whom the whole family of heaven
 "and earth is named, that he would grant you,
 "according to the riches of his glory, to be
 "strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner
 "man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by
 "faith, that ye being rooted and grounded in love
 "may be able to comprehend with all saints, what
 "is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height,
 "and to know the love of Christ, which—passeth
 "knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the
 "fullness of God."—Shall I confess, that when I
 read such passages as these, with numberless more
 from St. Paul and the other Apostles of our Lord, I
 cannot but regret, that even his most affectionate
 servants in our days are not more affectionate, and
 more awake to whatever concerns the advancement
 of his name, or the triumphs of his cross; though
 let me add, I would not have his name used like ma-
 gic, or his cross worshipped with superstition.

The commanding influence, which a rational and
 withal a fervent spirit of Christian piety will have
 on your various Ministrations, I must not pretend to
 set forth at large. This in general may be observed,
 that he who seriously considers himself as called by Pro-
 vidence to "beseech men in Christ's stead, to be re-
 "conciled unto God," will not dare either to dissemble,
 or to trifle with his hearers. Am I employed to address
 immortal souls, as a Minister of Jesus, concerning the
 "one thing needful," from motives respecting both
 them

them and myself, the most pleasing and the most awful? Are they, and am I, passing with rapidity, through a state of probation, to an everlasting scene? When I arrive there, must I give an account of this ministry to him "whom God hath ordained to judge the world in righteousness?" Blessed Saviour, "who is sufficient for these things?" But though I rely on thy grace alone, without which I feel that I can do nothing effectually; yet I feel also, that I must exert my utmost endeavours to save myself, and them who hear me:—What uprightness, zeal, diligence, fortitude, perseverance, may not be expected from him who laying his hand upon his heart, often holds this language "in the sight of God?"

The impresson which a superior sense of religion, cultivated by proper considerations and exercises in private, will produce on your Public Devotions, when you are addressing God as the mouth of the people, will be more particularly visible. Then indeed you will appear in your element. Your purest affections, and highest principles, will then be kindled together. The praises, the thanksgivings, the confessions, the supplications you utter, will evidently be the effusion of a full awakened soul to the Father of mercies and of mankind, under an immediate conviction of his presence and perfections, of his superintending providence, and infinite compassion in Christ Jesus. From communion with him in your closet, the transition to a more open one in his temple will be easy and natural. You will speak to him in the name, and on the behalf of your fellow worshippers, with

freedom and pleasure, from a consciousness that you do not forget them when they are absent, but "make mention of them in your prayers," as St. Paul frequently tells us he did of the primitive Christians in his.

Shall I venture to remark, that as far as my observation has gone, of those who preach with very laudable ability, but few comparatively pray, as might be wished, with copiousness, solemnity, readiness, and fervour. Why? Because they have not bestowed the same attention and study on this part as on the other. They have not taken pains early to lay in a store of proper materials, to form a taste for devout exercises in secret, to acquire a habit of pouring out the heart before God, unrestrained by the fear of bystanders, on the different occurrences of life, and the various situations of a pious and reflecting mind. Hence, if I mistake not, the dryness and formality so frequently attending the performance of this duty in public; the want of affection, fluency, and compass; with so little accommodation to the occasions and circumstances that arise. And hence it often happens, that none but conscientious worshippers find any disposition to join with seriousness in a service, rendered thus uninviting, though if differently conducted it might prove as attractive and delightful, as it is necessary and incumbent.

You may believe, I mean not to recommend that familiarity of air, briskness of manner, or flippancy of

of style, with which some have appeared as if they talked away to their Maker, instead of addressing him "with reverence and godly fear." If, in speaking to his fellow mortals, a preacher betrays marks of forwardness, the more judicious amongst his hearers will naturally be hurt by such indecorum. But they will much more readily forgive him, than if he should be guilty of the same behaviour in speaking to the great Eternal. Humility, Sir, undissembled humility will always become us; but never so well as when we approach to him "in whose fight the Heavens are not clean," and it's sublimest inhabitants "cover their faces with their wings." In a presence so transcendantly great and holy, let our souls bow with the profoundest awe: let our words, looks, and demeanour, express no sentiment, and no temper, but what is perfectly consistent with the most solemn veneration, and the most absolute dependence.

He, who discharges this duty as he ought, will seldom be attended to with entire indifference; but the pious and the thoughtful will always join him with satisfaction, and often with rapture. Touched by the sacred fire that glows in his heart, their's will burn within them. If such a metaphor may be allowed, they will feel, in it's happiest and most salutary effects, the electricity of devotion. Shall I add, that the power and beauty of the divine principle in the human breast, are never perhaps more conspicuous, than when a Christian Minister is seen, by his people around him, under it's actual operation, breathing

breathing forth the soul of benevolence and piety, in prayer for them, for himself, and for all mankind? When he afterwards turns his address to those very people, with the tenderness and solemnity which the preceding exercise has imprinted on his mind, I leave you to judge whether they will easily resist the pleadings of that man, at the tribunal of conscience, who could plead so eloquently and so zealously at the throne of grace.

That the interests of those, who call themselves Rational Dissenters, have for a considerable time been declining, is acknowledged and lamented by their best friends. To what must we impute it? Chiefly, I apprehend, to the decay of that fervent and devotional spirit, which distinguished a number of their predecessors, both amongst the people and the ministers. It was that spirit, which constituted the most essential difference between them and many of the establishment. Without that spirit indeed, which alone can give life, strength, and efficacy to every thing serious and good, where is the mighty odds of using forms, or of not using them, of worshipping in a church, or in a meeting? The modes and tenets may in some respects be different: but where “the power of godliness” is wanting on both sides, the predominant character of coldness and worldly mindedness will be the same. Yet, after all, what is there in the most reasonable system of religion you can suppose, that should deprive it of ardour, or lessen the affection of it’s professors, or it’s teachers? Ought not that ardour, and that affection, to keep pace with
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the intrinsic excellence of the system itself? And might it not be hoped, that where the views are principally directed to what is most vital and substantial, the mind would take the deepest interest, and the heart would beat with the strongest zeal? Such, in truth, would be the case, if false refinement, and dry argumentation, dignified with the names of politeness and philosophy, joined to a torrent of dissipation that carries away all orders of men, did not counterwork the most important considerations. By what means the people, or the ministers, of any denomination, are to be fortified against so spreading an evil, it is not easy to tell. In the mean while, it would surely be much for the honour of those who now hear me, were they to unite their endeavours in setting an example of holy fervour, and to "shine as lights in the world," amidst the clouds of sensuality and scepticism that thicken around them.

How your living and acting as "in the sight of God," will affect your Intercourse with men, and particularly with those committed to your pastoral care, it would be agreeable, if it were requisite, to explain. But you will readily conceive, from your own experience, that laying open your heart habitually to the common Parent of men, in the name of their common Saviour, must habitually dispose it to the practice of every thing liberal and benign. A devotional preacher, such as I have delineated, will be found the kindest counsellor, the tenderest comforter, the warmest and most sympathetic friend. The lively sense of spiritual and immortal objects,

which

which he brings with him from retirement, will mix with his conversation, and to speak in the emphatic style of Scripture, will “season it with salt, so as “to minister grace to the hearers.” He will seldom indeed pass any time in company, without taking occasion to introduce or insinuate something serious, moral, sentimental, or instructive. But in doing this, he will be governed by a prudent regard to persons and circumstances. True religion affects nothing austere, and nothing unseasonable. The most pious man will naturally be the most affectionate and the most complacent. It is not piety, but superstition, or bigotry, that produces a gloomy temper, or forbidding manners. St. Paul, as we have seen, was a pattern of benevolence and courtesy. And we know, that his Master and our’s was the perfection of charity and meekness.

Whatever opportunities occur, for promoting the welfare or consolation of others, especially where their highest interests are in question, you will embrace with alacrity, from principles which no unworthiness, or unkindness on the part of men, can conquer, namely, the love of God, and of his Son. There may indeed be numbers, with whom those principles will not oblige you to cultivate an intimacy. In this respect, it will much import your peace, your reputation, your safety, to practise great circumspection. But the more you relish the duties and the joys of religion, the less you will be inclined to associate with those that have not a taste for them, and the more you will be attached to those that have.

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When alone, you will give yourself diligently to reading, meditation, and prayer, with the other necessary preparations for your public labours. A devout and studious turn will save you from the danger of being seen too often in gay assemblies, or by uncandid observers. In this way you may be thought less polite, or too reserved; but I am persuaded you will find yourself a gainer on higher accounts. When you step into society, your chief delight will be “in the excellent ones of the earth;” and you will be particularly pleased, when you discover such amongst your flock. On them you will gladly bestow the largest share of your esteem and attention; and from them you will learn many things conducive to your greater comfort and usefulness; at the same time that I have the satisfaction to assure you, those I think of are as far from a pert affectation of superior knowledge or sanctity, as any set of people I have ever seen. In truth, the best minds are always the most unassuming.

And now permit me, before I conclude, to touch on some of the Happy Effects, that will result to yourself from an ardent and elevated spirit of piety, in the discharge of your ministerial office. The work in which you are engaged is arduous and laborious. But its toils and difficulties will be greatly softened,—may I not say, frequently converted into sweetness, by prosecuting it “in the sight of God,” with zeal and unction; by the joy of finding, as I trust you will find, that “your labour of love” is not unsuccessful; and by the chearful encreasing hope
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of divine aid, and final acceptance. Your reflections on a conduct thus honourable, thus animated, thus sustained, cannot fail to inspire a magnanimity, that will ever preserve you from descending to the little, versatile, and ignoble arts of popularity, which enslave and disgrace too many of the profession. They will make you "bold as a lion," to encounter any danger or discouragement, that may arise from one quarter or another. The more you venerate the cause of truth, righteousness, and religious liberty, as the cause of God, you will assert and plead it with the greater fortitude, "whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear." If some should mistake, misrepresent, calumniate, you will appeal from their ignorance, from their falsehood, and from their malignity, to an approving conscience, and to the unerring Judge. You will remember too, that "the disciple is not greater than his Master, nor the servant above his Lord;" and you will have the consolation to know, that he who is at the head of the universe, and for whom you are "ready to suffer the loss of all things, will never leave nor forsake you."

With respect, indeed, to your external situation, you must, under God, depend, in a great measure, on the steady attachment of those who hear you. But surely, the greater and better part of them will not be apt to relinquish a Pastor who acts in the manner and on the principles before suggested.

It may with truth be said, for the body of the people called Protestant Dissenters, in general, but particularly in London, and the commercial and manufacturing cities and towns throughout England, that they have long approved themselves very kind and liberal to their Ministers; and few, I believe, of that number have as yet been left to struggle with hardships, comparable to those, which are suffered by thousands of worthy clergymen in the Established Church.—What pity were it, if the very affecting representation, lately published on this last subject, by one of her most learned, moderate, and deserving Prelates, should not meet with the attention and regard it merits!

To resume the point before us, as I am sure that no man, of a spirit truly religious, will ever sacrifice his integrity to his gain; so I verily believe, that whilst you continue, by manifestation of the truth, to commend yourself to every man's conscience in the sight of God, he will from time to time raise up those who will honour and protect you, for his, and for your work's sake. As to the Members of this Society, I will pledge myself for them, that they will go on to give you all the encouragement in their power, as long you are at pains to deserve it, that is to say, as long as your connection with them shall last. They are candid, and they are generous. I owe them that testimony.—What say you, my friends? Do I over-rate your character? If this young man proves faithful to you, may I not engage for you, that you will not be wanting to him? If I
still

still retain some interest in your hearts, allow me to use it in favour of my successor. Let me hope, that you will seriously attend to his instructions, earnestly pray for a blessing on his labours, and unanimously concur to strengthen his hands. So shall you live together in peace and piety on earth, and he will at last have many enlightened and sanctified spirits "to present before God as his joy and crown in the day of the Lord."—How happy shall I be to meet and rejoice with him and you, my much loved and ever respected hearers, in the abodes of immortal friendship! Amen.

THE END.

ERRATUM : Page 62, line 22,—For *not of the truth*,—read, *not of truth*.

